

Proposed Limestone West Timber Sale

Project Update

February 9, 2018

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Central Land Office - Bozeman Unit



Project Progression

The purpose of this notice is to update the public on project development since the last notice, discuss the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) alternative development, and advise the public of ways to stay informed and receive notifications about the project.

Since our last project update ([December 2016](#)) DNRC has focused attention on project refinement. Over the past year, DNRC has also been meeting with interested parties to discuss options for the proposed project area. We have analyzed the public comments received and identified issues that will be studied in detail in the EIS. DNRC is now entering the environmental analysis phase of the project.

EIS Alternative Refinement

Over the past year, we have received various recommendations for project alternatives. The proposed alternatives have been thoroughly explored. While many of these proposals will not be carried through the analysis in the Draft EIS, each proposal will be described in detail within the EIS with regard to the project goals and objectives.

EIS Alternatives for Analysis

Through careful consideration of each public comment submitted and extensive field reconnaissance, the ID Team identified issues related to the proposed project. Issues to be analyzed in detail were determined to be relevant and within the scope of the project. These issues will be included in the impacts analyses and were used to assist the ID Team in alternative development. The impacts of four alternatives will be analyzed in the Draft EIS.

Based on data collected from the field, the ID Team developed Action Alternative A to meet the project objectives. After considering various issues and concerns raised by the public and internally, to the extent practicable, the ID Team developed Action Alternative B.

1. **No-Action Alternative:** A no-action alternative will be considered and analyzed. Under the No-Action Alternative, no timber harvesting would occur in the project area at this time, and no conservation license would be issued. The impacts of no timber harvest within the project area will be analyzed.
2. **Action Alternative A:** This action alternative proposes harvest units using both conventional, ground-based equipment as well as cable harvest systems. This alternative would require the most road infrastructure, treat more acres and, potentially, be the most visible alternative from recreation corridors and residential areas. The impacts of harvesting approximately 4.3 million board feet (MMBF) from 600 acres utilizing both tractor and cable harvest system will be analyzed. Approximately 9.1 miles of restricted road would be constructed, of which 3.8 miles would be reclaimed upon project completion. See the attached Project Proposal Alternative A Map for details.
3. **Action Alternative B:** This action alternative proposes harvest units using only conventional, ground-based equipment and defers harvest in the areas identified as highly valuable to the public, notably adjacent to the Triple Tree trail. This alternative would require less road infrastructure, treat less acres, would limit viewshed

impacts to surrounding residents and recreational users, and would retain more security cover for wildlife in comparison to Alternative A. The impacts of harvesting approximately 2.7 MMBF from 373 acres utilizing only a tractor harvest system will be analyzed. Approximately 6.2 miles of restricted road would be constructed, of which 1.6 miles would be reclaimed upon project completion. See the attached Project Proposal Alternative B Map for details.

4. **Action Alternative C:** Under Montana Code Annotated [77-5-208](#), the Department may accept applications for conservation licenses in lieu of timber sale. DNRC received an application for a conservation license in lieu of timber sale in the fall of 2016. This license is a temporary deferral of timber harvest over a specified geographic area. During the MEPA process, the Department must set the term length of the license as well as other provisions contained within it. Through this application process, conservation license applicants would reserve the right to bid against timber sale purchasers during the bidding phase of this timber sale project. This action alternative will analyze for the issuance of a conservation license in lieu of a timber sale and the impacts associated with deferral of forest management for various term lengths in the project area.

Public Review

DNRC will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We anticipate a public review of the Draft EIS in spring 2018. All interested parties will be notified when the Draft EIS is available for review online. At that time, the public will have 45 days to provide comments on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS will incorporate necessary changes based on public comments received or errors identified by the ID Team during the 45-day public review period. The Final EIS will also include DNRC's responses to comments received during the Draft EIS review period.

How can I stay informed?

For more information on the proposed Limestone West Timber Sale Project, please visit our project website at [\[http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/limestone-west\]](http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/limestone-west). Here you will find the latest updates, project maps, frequently asked questions, and more.

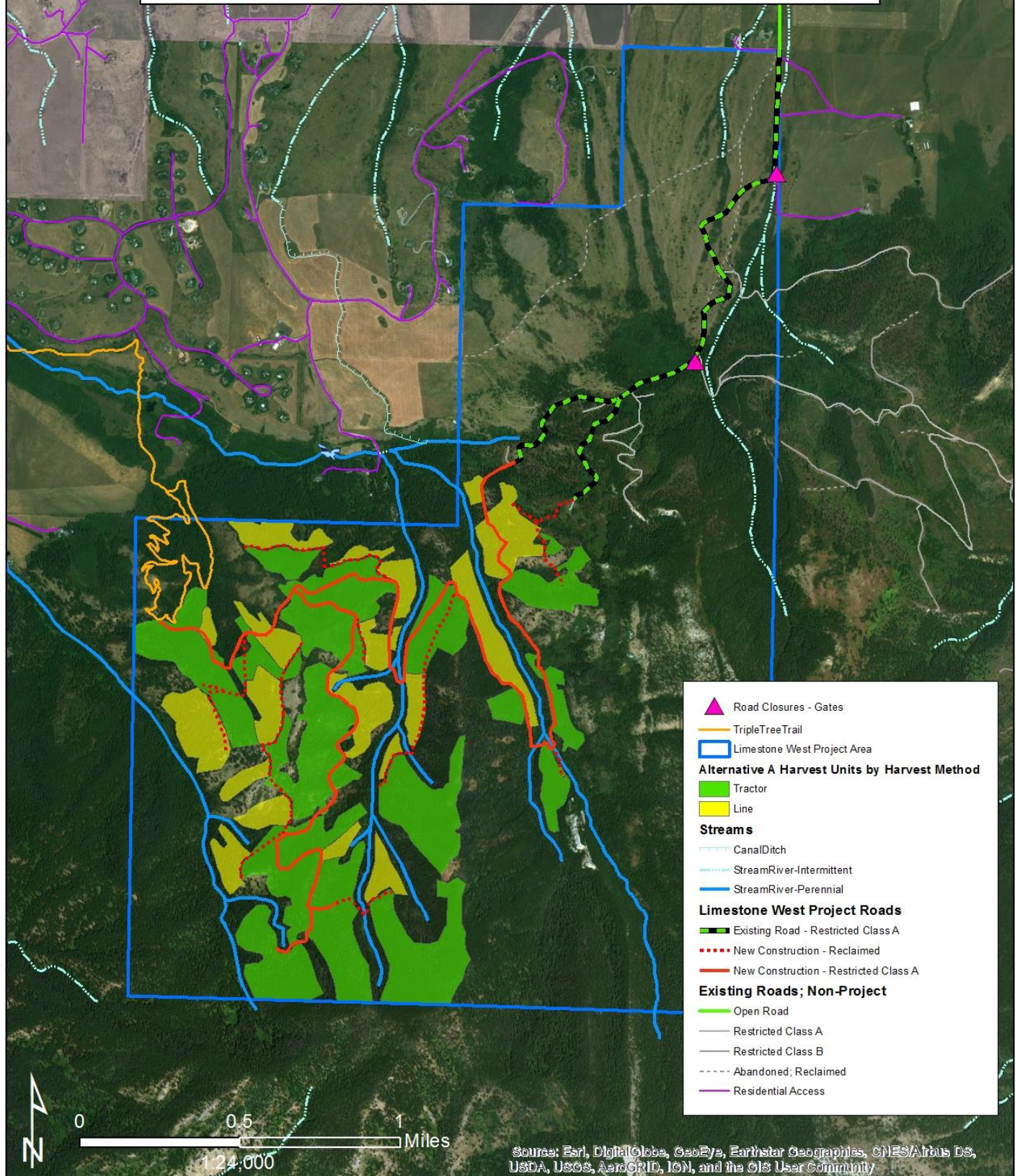
Interested Parties List

Would you like to receive project updates and notification that the Draft EIS is available for review? DNRC will add you to the interested parties list. To be added to the list, please email your contact information (name and email) to LimestoneWest@mt.gov. If you have submitted comments or received this email, then you are on the list. Please email us if you would like to be removed.

For more information, please contact:

Chuck Barone, Project Leader
Montana DNRC
2273 Boot Hill Court, Ste. 110
Bozeman, MT 59715
email: LimestoneWest@mt.gov
call: (406) 556-4506

Proposed Limestone West Timber Sale Action Alternative A (600 acres) January 2018



Proposed Limestone West Timber Sale Action Alternative B (373 acres) January 2018

